

Flipping their way to success

The Texas A&M Gymnastics Club will host Nationals April 4-5

By Sara Duesing
THE BATTALION

Throughout time, sports teams that have been successful have all had something in common — talent.

Yet what has proved to separate the best teams from the good teams are traits such as unity, attitude and desire — all found within the Texas A&M Gymnastics Club.

Senior club and nationals meet director Denise Bean said her teammates' positive outlook and desire to win have pushed them past the competition.

"Talent doesn't have much to do with it," Bean said. "Attitude is more important, especially in competition."

The 49 students who make up this year's club put in at least 20 hours of practice a week. Head Gymnastics Coach Steve Waples said the dedication of the participants is impressive since the pro-

gram lacks scholarship opportunities.

"Texas produces some of the most elite gymnasts, but they all leave to go somewhere else," he said. "Our best chance to be a major national power is to be able to get top recruits."

"Our team here is inexperienced now, but they have been eager to learn."

Waples said although some members on the club team lack meet exposure, they are still in good shape.

Bean said hard work and dedication have greatly improved the club's success in just a few months.

"You'd be amazed at how much we've improved since the fall," Bean said. "Thanks to a good, patient coach and a lot of willpower, we have one of the stronger programs in gymnastics."

Waples looks forward to the nationals competition, which will be held April 4-5 at the Student Recreation Center, and said the team's goal is to host the best competition.

"We want it to be enjoyable for the students at Texas A&M and for those who come to Texas," Waples said. "We have the best draw of teams coming and it will be a good competition."

The Aggies captured the national title two years ago but finished second last season, behind the University of Miami at Ohio. Senior Wendi Craft, president of the club, said the team is looking for revenge this year to reclaim the title.

"We won it two years ago and we want to win it again," Craft said. "We also want to show off our Aggie Spirit. There were maybe 100 spectators in Ohio last year and we want to show them that Aggieland is the place to be."

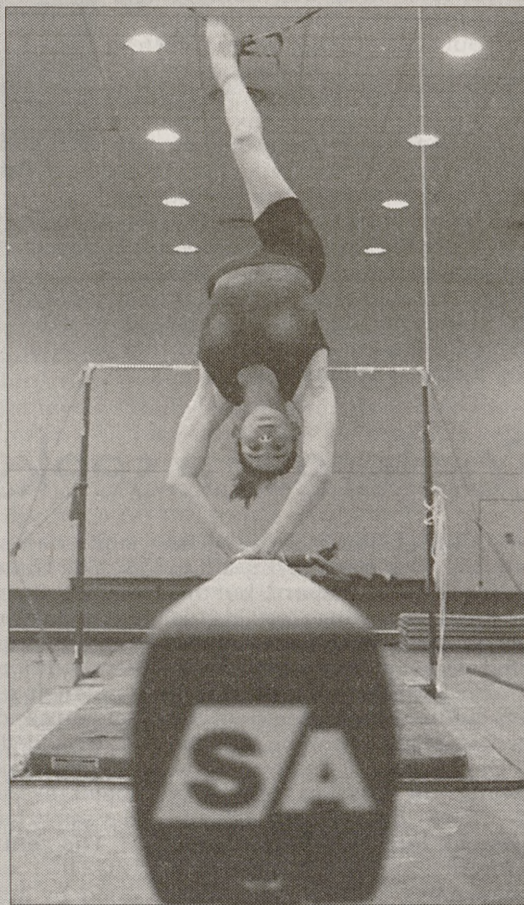
Both Craft and Bean began gymnastics at young ages and both have made impacts on the successes of the club. Bean said the club offers a number of benefits.

"It's great stress relief," she said. "We come and play around and have made some great friendships."

Craft said the club's main focus is to promote unity and offer a way to practice recreational gymnastics.

"There are all types of people involved — beginners, cheerleaders, and the more advanced," Craft said. "You don't have to be a competitor to fit in here."

Waples said since the team is together out-



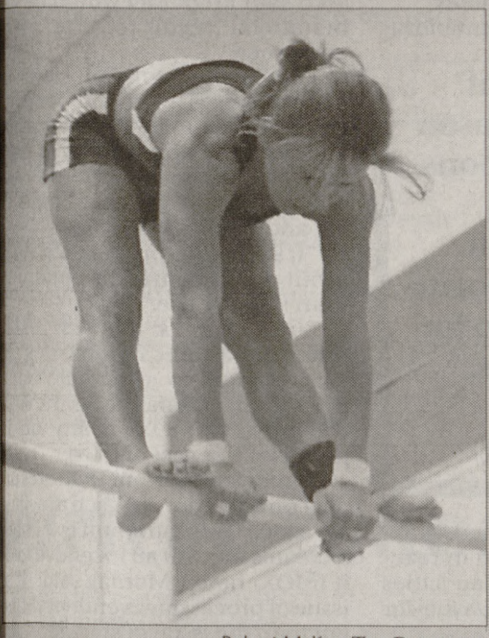
Robert McKay, THE BATTALION

Laurie Blackley, a member of the Gymnastics Club, practices on the balance beam Tuesday.

side of practice, it has made it easier to coach and instruct.

"I've done more spotting and teaching than I can remember this year," he said. "But they are fresh athletes who are very positive and work very hard."

"Every year, we win more and more so we can just continue to build as the confidence level rises. Hopefully, we'll always be in the top three so we can help the reputation of Texas A&M athletics."



Robert McKay, THE BATTALION

Abby Lindeman practices on the uneven bars with the team Tuesday evening.

Lawmaker floats 'locker fee' to raise money for arenas

DALLAS (AP) — Playing professional sports in Texas could cost athletes up to \$5,000 per game unless a state lawmaker's proposal to raise money for arenas.

State Rep. Kim Brimer, R-Arlington, says he wants to give cities as many options as possible, including taxing the athletes and broadcasters who benefit from public investment in sports palaces.

"We can't do the income tax bit, but

we can sure as heck do a locker fee," said Brimer, chair of the House Business and Industry committee.

The state constitution prohibits a state income tax.

The committee began hearing testimony last week on Brimer's bill to allow local voters to assess an array of taxes to finance sports facilities.

Possible levies include a sales tax boost, a levy on car rentals and hotel rooms, and charges on parking

and ticket permits.

An expert for a group representing hotels and car rental companies, Texans for Fair Play, told the committee it made no economic sense to pay for sports arenas by taxing those industries.

Instead, cities should find a way to spread some of the costs to direct beneficiaries like athletes, said Mark Rosentraub, director of the center for Urban Policy and the Environment

at Indiana University and author of "Major League Losers: The Real Cost of Sports and Who's Paying for It."

"Why should you pay taxes so that Michael Irvin can earn a higher salary?" Rosentraub said in an interview Tuesday. "If you want to see Michael Irvin, then you should pay whatever it costs you to see him. If the Cowboys charge \$50, then you should pay \$50. Hotels and rental cars have nothing to do with it."

Announcer Ward interested in Oilers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Longtime University of Tennessee play-by-play announcer John Ward has expressed interest in the same job with the NFL's Oilers when the team moves to Tennessee from Houston.

Mike McClure, Oilers executive vice president for administration, said Ward is one of "many, many people who have expressed interest and been contacted about the position."

Ward said, "Basically, I'm flattered there's interest. They've expressed an interest and that's really all the comment I want to make."

Ward will begin his 30th season with the Vols' football team this fall. The Oilers are scheduled to move to Nashville in 1999 and could play in Memphis earlier if they get out of their lease in Houston.



Kleinecke

in Big 12 Conference play, the Lady Aggies are looking forward to regionals.

"With just nine conference matches left before the regionals, we are working to place ourselves in a good ranking for seeding purposes," Kleinecke said.

The sister team of Lisa and Nancy Dingwall, which has compiled a 15-6 overall record, moved up in doubles ranking as well. Previously ranked 45th, the duo has jumped 15 spots to 30th.

"They have had several excellent wins this spring," Kleinecke said. "I am not surprised that they are in the top 30. They have also beaten two of the top 20 teams already this spring."

SPORTS BRIEFS

Ramp Romp VII to be held March 22

Kyle Field Ramp Romp VII, sponsored by the Department of Recreational Sports, will be held Saturday, March 22, at 9 a.m. The 5K course, which begins at Kyle Field and continues through campus before returning to Kyle Field, is open to the public.

Entries before March 18 will be \$5 for faculty, students and staff with Rec Membership and \$10 for all other runners.

Registration forms may be picked up at G. Rollie White Coliseum, Academy, Read Building, Student Recreation Center and Footlocker.

Women's tennis moves up to 23rd

The Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team has moved up six places to 23rd in the latest Rolex Collegiate Rankings.

"One of our goals is to be ranked in the top 20," Head Coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "I am excited for us to be closer to that goal."

Currently 9-2, including a 2-0 record

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